United Nations E/2002/SR.31

Economic and Social Council

Provisional
21 October 2002

Original: English

Substantive session of 2002
General segment

Provisional summary record of the 31st meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Friday, 19 July 2002, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. Rosenthal (Vice-President) ..... (Guatemala)

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Regional cooperation

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02-48895 (E)

In the absence of Mr. Šimonović (Croatia), Mr. Rosenthal (Guatemala), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

Regional cooperation (E/2002/15 and Add.1-3 and Add.3/Corr.1 and 16-20)

Panel discussion on interregional cooperation for sustainable development: regional challenges ahead

1. **Ms. Schmögnerová** (Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE)), Panellist, highlighted the major trends in the ECE region with respect to the three key dimensions of sustainable development. Regarding the economic dimension, she said that, over the past decade, Western Europe and North America had enjoyed significant growth in gross domestic product (GDP) per capita. That trend had been accompanied by structural changes in the production system, with a shift from material- and energy-intensive sectors to services. The countries of Central and Eastern Europe were beginning to recover from the transition recession. Yet, only a few of those countries had surpassed their 1989 output levels. All were aiming to accelerate their growth, restructure heavy industries, phase out obsolete technologies and increase energy efficiency.

2. Concerning the social dimension, she said that while poverty and unemployment affected the entire region, countries with economies in transition were the hardest hit. In some of those countries, the proportion of the total population living in poverty had increased from 2-3 per cent to 30-40 per cent. Life expectancy, particularly for men, had declined dramatically and people faced many kinds of insecurity. Conflicts in certain parts of the region had further exacerbated the situation.

3. As to the environmental dimension, in Western Europe and North America, technological innovations had helped to reduce the energy and material intensity of many consumer goods and a small but growing number of consumers were making lifestyle changes in order to lessen the environmental impact of their consumption patterns. However, the increasing volume of goods used and discarded and the structure of consumer demand in key areas, such as energy and transport, had outweighed many of those gains.

4. The countries of the ECE region faced four major challenges. First, they must address the issues of poverty, income disparities and, given their ageing populations, intergenerational solidarity, in a context of budgetary constraints and economic competition. Second, they must accelerate the move towards more sustainable patterns of production and consumption. Third, steps must be taken to preserve the global commons. Fourth, governance and participatory democracy must be strengthened, with a view to increasing public participation in decision-making on all aspects of sustainable development.

5. Efforts to meet those challenges at the national level must be accompanied by regional cooperation. ECE was already playing an important role in that regard by: supporting subregional and regional processes engaged in the ECE region and relating to sustainable development; developing legally binding instruments, ranging from environmental conventions to ECE norms and standards; and assisting countries with economies in transition to move towards sustainable development. ECE was committed to further strengthening its activities in the area of sustainable development, based on the proven assets of the regional commissions.

6. **Mr. Kim** Hak-Su (Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)), Panellist, said that improving the quality of life for the hundreds of millions of people living in poverty represented an enormous challenge for the Asia and the Pacific region, which, like a number of other regions, had to deal with such problems as illiteracy, malnutrition, HIV/AIDS, ageing, poor access to water and sanitation, transboundary pollution, desertification, equitable use of shared natural resources and, in particular, unsustainable development. Those common concerns underscored the need for interregional cooperation and coordination. Given the scarcity of international resources, such cooperation offered an efficient way of building capacity, providing training and sharing knowledge, experience and best practices. It was imperative, in all regions, that stakeholders, particularly non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and women, should be involved in formulating and implementing policies.

7. The regional commissions were well positioned to contribute to and, indeed, had already taken steps to promote interregional cooperation. As regional coordination mechanisms, they embraced a variety of institutions, including United Nations bodies and specialized agencies, intergovernmental organizations, subregional organizations and regional financial and

technical assistance institutions. ESCAP, for its part, was collaborating with ECE on the rational and efficient use of energy and water resources in Central Asia and on a set of guidelines for public participation in environment-related matters, a field in which ECE had extensive experience. It was exploring similar cooperation with other regional commissions, including with the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia on desertification and urban governance.

8. The development and implementation of a mechanism to promote more robust interregional cooperation should be pursued further through, inter alia, joint programming and projects, as well as discussion forums, with a view to encouraging not only North-South but also South-South cooperation.

9. **Mr. Ocampo** (Executive Secretary of the, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)), Panellist, said that in the ten years since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro the concept of sustainable development had become a frame of reference for the international agenda, not just in environmental matters, but also in poverty alleviation, gender equality, population and human settlements. However, the international community's initial enthusiasm for implementing the principles and goals agreed in Rio had decreased, and it was to be hoped that the World Summit on Sustainable Development would provide an opportunity to reaffirm political commitments, make the global agenda more cohesive, improve its translation into action and strengthen operational links with regional and national agencies.

10. In the Latin American and Caribbean region, much remained to be done to promote cohesive financial, commercial, investment and environmental policies which served the needs of sustainable development. Institution-building efforts were required to promote clear and consistent regulatory frameworks and stable public expenditure that dovetailed with international financing and private investment. There was still a worrying tendency to allow international concern for the environment to justify imposing extra conditions on development assistance or to replace such assistance with trade alone. In addition, there was a widespread perception in the region that environmental protection and sustainable development held back economic development. The institutions in charge of implementing environmental policy were weak from the point of view of formulation and implementation, so policies and regulatory instruments continued to be reactive rather than pro-active. Too little attention had been devoted to encouraging policies combining environmental improvements with competitiveness in output.

11. ECLAC was attempting to forge a link between the various public policy areas for the sake of stable, equitable and environmentally sustainable growth. There were five priorities for the Governments of the region. The first was to use comprehensive economic, social and environmental indicators to evaluate development sustainability, a particular necessity in the light of the Millennium development goals. The second was to integrate economic and environmental policies. ECLAC planned to analyse the link between trade and the environment at the international, regional and subregional levels, and explore ways of financing sustainable development through increased levels of investment in the environment. The third was to look for new opportunities for production, using the region's natural resources and environmental services as a basis, with a focus on energy efficiency closely based on the Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. The fourth was to promote sustainable ecosystem management and biological diversity by assisting countries to investigate innovative ways of funding efforts to restore and conserve ecosystems and value the global environmental services they provided. That emerging market was one in which developing countries, particularly megadiverse developing countries, should be helped to take part through transfers of technology. The fifth was to incorporate sustainable development into the management of urban environments through the reduction of urban poverty and the management of water resources.

12. Regional cooperation was vital to ensure implementation of Agenda 21 and whatever commitments were made at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, on the basis of a more integrated view of economic, social and environmental considerations and the specific character of each area.

13. The current institutional structure for dealing with the environment in each region was in need of reform. The first step should be to strengthen the role of the regional commissions as entities which could support intergovernmental cooperation and integration at the regional and subregional levels. Throughout the preparatory process for the World Summit on Sustainable Development, the regional commissions had maintained continuous dialogue and collaboration

with each other. ECLAC believed that the priorities for expanding such interregional cooperation should be trade and the environment, taxation policy and the environment, the financing of sustainable development, energy and biodiversity.

14. **Mr. Amoako** (Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA)), Panellist, said that, at the time of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Rio de Janeiro, 1992), about 200 million Africans had been living in extreme poverty, on less than $1 per day. Today, 100 million more had joined them, many of them the victims of H //AIDS. The people of Africa and the continent's environmental sustainability were in jeopardy. The growth rate in Africa in 2001 had been 4.1 per cent, the highest of any region; poverty reduction was now a more central element of many African development strategies; and there had been a renewal of social investment. Yet, if current trends continued, only 10 African countries would meet the poverty reduction, education and health targets set in the Millennium Declaration. Although there was a need for more debt reduction, increased aid and the removal of trade barriers, the most serious problem facing Africa was the HIV/AIDS epidemic. It would be vital to ensure that the World Summit on Sustainable Development, to be held in Johannesburg in 2002, strengthened international solidarity in combating the disease.

15. If the current global climate trends continued and Africa became a full degree warmer over the next half century, there would be 10 per cent less rainfall in Southern Africa and the Horn and 15 per cent less in the parched Sahel, forests would shrink by 25 per cent, and the populations of low-lying coastal areas would have to move inland because of rising oceans. Climate change would require extremely costly adjustments which Africa, as the poorest continent, was least able to bear. The number of African countries experiencing water scarcity was expected to increase from 14 to 20 over the next 25 years; that called for greater attention to water management in regional and subregional water basins. Other major challenges were desertification and soil degradation. While he welcomed the decision by the International Fund for Agricultural Development to allocate a significant part of its portfolio to projects to limit the growths of deserts, the problem called for a more dramatic response. The reversal of soil degradation must be made a global priority, on a par with those that had emerged from the Rio Earth Summit.

16. In the light of those priorities, the emphasis in the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) on sound governance and investment was most welcome. More efficient power grids, better transport systems and transboundary water sharing would all pay environmental and economic dividends. The United Nations played a vital role in building momentum for the common good. He therefore urged the Council to give its full support to efforts to promote human solidarity in the face of HIV/AIDS and to achieve economic development and environmental sustainability.

17. **Ms. Osseiran** (Secretary of the Commission, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)), Panellist, said that the preparations for the World Summit on Sustainable Development had strengthened the commitment to sustainable development in the ESCWA region, as well as highlighting the importance of linking its environmental, social and economic dimensions. It had become clear that efforts to achieve sustainable development would require not only regional consultation and coordination, but also interregional integration and communication on priority areas of mutual concern.

18. At the regional level, ESCWA member countries had worked hard to improve education, literacy and health and opportunities for women. Progress was also evident in the establishment of an intraregional electricity grid and of gas pipelines between some member countries. Regional efforts to harmonize environmental standards and customs procedures were under way. However, despite those achievements, significant challenges remained: lack of peace and security, poverty and unemployment, indebtedness, unsustainable consumption and production patterns, inadequate natural resource management, limited research in and adoption of appropriate technologies, weak participatory approaches and lack of capacity on the part of civil society to become actively involved in the sustainable development process. Solutions to those problems would have to take into account the social, political and economic specificities of the ESCWA member countries if they were to be effective.

19. The regional preparatory process for the World Summit on Sustainable Development had culminated in the adoption of the Executive Summary of the Arab Regional Assessment Report on sustainable development and the Arab Declaration on Sustainable Development, which had identified the need for an integrated pan-Arab strategy for achieving sustainable

development. The formulation of a shared platform of priorities was a first step towards Arab interregional integration of sustainable development efforts. However, if the ESCWA member countries were to reap the benefits of such an approach, they would also need to formulate an interregional action plan, establish an interregional institutional arrangement focused on sustainable development and adopt operational mechanisms for the implementation of agreed actions and approaches.

20. Interregional efforts must be based on proven similarities in regional sustainable development platforms. In that connection, there was a need to establish formal mechanisms to strengthen interregional cooperation not only among regional organizations sharing transboundary sustainable development concerns, but also among organizations seeking to support similar sustainable development objectives.

21. There were a number of constraints on the interregional integration of sustainable development issues, including inadequate financial and human resources, lack of regional peace and security, lack of mutual trust between the States concerned, different programme cycles for different regional agencies and inadequate institutional arrangements. Those constraints must be addressed, since collective efforts and synergies between regions increased the effectiveness of sustainable development strategies and facilitated the implementation of sustainable development action plans that reflected regional priorities and national aspirations.

22. **Mr. Rojas** (Chile) welcomed the contribution of ECLAC in fostering sustainable development and said that it could play an important role by tailoring the Millennium development goals to the situation in each of the countries of the region. ECLAC had made a constructive contribution to a number of regional initiatives and associations, including the Summit of the Americas Process and the Free Trade Area of the Americas.

23. **Mr. Balarezo** (Peru) said that, although the executive secretaries had covered a variety of issues, they had nevertheless highlighted certain common themes. The first was poverty, which was at the centre of the regional commissions' concerns. The second was sustainable development, though it was clear that each region, particularly Africa, had specific desires and needs in that regard. The third was the need to reinforce the regional and subregional focus as the most effective way of translating international plans into action at the national and local levels. In that connection, he asked what ECLAC was doing to ensure that Agenda 21 was implemented, particularly in the light of the connection between poverty and economic growth.

24. **Mr. Ntwaagae** (Observer for Botswana) said that he was gratified by the emphasis which the executive secretaries had placed on sustainable development, especially in the case of Africa. The efforts made by ECA to support African countries were commendable, particularly in the preparations for trade negotiations prior to the Doha ministerial conference of WTO. The Executive Secretary of ECA had rightly highlighted the challenges facing Africa, which were not unique to the continent, but were particularly serious there: illiteracy, poverty and its alleviation and, most of all, HIV/AIDS.

25. **Ms. Marroquín** (Guatemala) echoed the views of the representative of Chile regarding the important role played by ECLAC and singled out for praise the ECLAC subregional headquarters in Mexico City for its role in assisting the countries of Central America. She asked for comments on the economic situation in Latin America, which was in its third year of recession. She wondered whether that was simply a cyclical phenomenon, or whether it was the result of other factors.

26. **Ms. Loemban Tobing-Klein** (Suriname) said that interregional cooperation was crucial for the achievement of sustainable development. She therefore looked forward to the holding in Johannesburg later in the year of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, which should seek to adopt recommendations that would be implemented, rather than remaining on paper. Turning to the work of the regional commissions, she asked whether they were cooperating with the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States and what steps had been taken by ECLAC to promote cooperation among the ECLAC member countries in implementing the International Plan of Action on Ageing 2002 adopted at the Second World Assembly on Ageing (Madrid, 2002). Lastly, she expressed satisfaction at the excellent work of the ECLAC subregional headquarters for the Caribbean in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago.

27. **Mr. Kogda** (Burkina Faso) welcomed the emphasis which the executive secretaries were placing on collaboration between the regional commissions, as that approach should help to identify specific problems

and lead to the sharing of best practices. The regional approach to development, in which the regional commissions played the central role, provided valuable guidance to individual Governments. ECA in particular was addressing Africa's very serious plight by appealing to all of the United Nations system to take concerted action. NEPAD was a significant step forward in that regard.

28. **Ms. Schmögnerová** (Executive Secretary of the, Economic Commission for Europe), Panellist, said that, although most of the questions and comments concerned the other regional commissions, she nevertheless had some general comments to make. ECE was involved in sustainable development efforts through the five environmental conventions covering its region. It was collaborating with the other regional commissions in connection with those conventions. For example, there was cooperation between ECE and ESCAP regarding the Aarhus Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters and regarding energy and water resources in the Central Asian republics of the former Soviet Union. Ageing was also a central concern, and a forthcoming ministerial conference on the subject would endeavour to draw up a declaration of principles and a regional strategy that would be of particular significance for economies in transition. Concerns over economic growth focused primarily on the extent to which trends in the United States affected other countries and on the increasing income disparity between developed economies and economies in transition or within economies in transition.

29. **Mr. Kim** Hak-Su (Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific), Panellist, responding to the question from the representative of Peru regarding efforts to implement Agenda 21, said that the preparatory process for the World Summit on Sustainable Development had identified areas requiring action by ESACP which included cleaner production technologies and sustainable energy systems, and the provision and management of fresh water. Those areas were reflected in ESCAP programmes. As the Asia-Pacific region was a major energy consumer, the emphasis on renewable and sustainable energy would continue. ESCAP was also involved in policy-making regarding water management through forums such as, the World Water Assessment Programme coordinated by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and in handling water-related natural disasters.

30. Although Africa had the greatest number of Least Developed Countries (LDCs), Asia had the largest proportion of people living in absolute poverty: 70 per cent of the world total. The Office of the Executive Secretary had a section dealing with LDCs, and a poverty centre had been launched together with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to monitor implementation of the Millennium development goals. Future activities would include a study on poverty in the region and joint preparation of a ministerial-level meeting on LDCs, landlocked developing countries and small island developing states.

31. **Mr. Ocampo** (Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean), Panellist, said that the ECLAC Subregional Office for the Caribbean played the highly important role of handling all issues concerning small island developing States. With regard to interregional cooperation, ECLAC was in the process of instituting a mechanism to promote the outcome of the Second World Assembly on Ageing held in Madrid, primarily through its Latin American and Caribbean Demographic Centre — Population Division (CELADE).

32. Some gains had been realized in Latin America and the Caribbean in implementing Agenda 21. In particular, the institutions dealing with environmental issues were much stronger than at the time of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. However, many of those institutions operated on the sidelines of the government administration. One of the chief aims of the World Summit on Sustainable Development should be to achieve full integration of the environmental dimension into the economic agenda, particularly where trade, industry, energy and water were concerned. New economic instruments were required at the national, regional and multilateral levels that would recognize the economic value of environmental resources. The step that had been taken in the Kyoto Protocol to create a market for global environmental services in relation to carbon emissions should be extended to many other areas. Many countries of the Latin American and Caribbean region were rich in biodiversity and in a position to contribute to mitigation of global warming. Appropriate mechanisms should be found to exploit the region's comparative advantages in those two areas.

33. The economic crisis of 2001 was continuing and worsening in 2002 and was potentially the most severe the region had experienced. The projected contraction in regional GDP for 2002 was due to a large extent to the situation of Argentina, but the figures excluding Argentina still reflected only minimal growth for the rest of the region, lower than the population growth rate for the second consecutive year. Although the roots of the problem were political as well as economic, the uncertainty in financial markets since the Asian crisis was a major factor, which had affected all emerging economies. The positive balance of net resource transfers during the period from 1990 to 1997 had been reversed, and the balance had remained negative for the past five years. The foreign direct investment component, one of the main sources of growth during the past decade, was also on the decline from its peak in 1999. The slowing of the United States economy had had a contractionary impact on the export industries of Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean, and the shock waves of the events of 11 September 2001 had badly depressed tourism in the Caribbean and had caused a sharp drop in prices of raw materials, the export mainstay of many Latin American countries.

34. **Mr. Amoako** (Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa), Panellist, said that, since Africa had the largest number of least developed countries of any of the regions and many landlocked countries and small island States as well, one of the first things the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States had done was to come to Addis Ababa to learn about ECA programmes and identify areas for increased collaboration and synergy with his Office. They had discussed cooperation on issues of poverty, trade, transport and information and communication technologies (ICT) for development.

35. In answer to questions about implementation of Agenda 21 he said that the mid-year economic report for Africa, which would shortly be published, would contain an in-depth analysis of the sustainable development challenges for the continent. ECA had created a sustainable development index for 38 African countries based on some 28 environmental and institutional indicators. Between 1974 and 2000, the number of countries showing a low sustainability index had increased from 16 to 19, and only three showed a high index for 2000. The irony was that most African countries had ratified most of the major environmental conventions, yet the situation had not improved. For real improvement, greater resources and institutional capacity were needed. ECA believed that learning how to replicate sustainable technologies could make a difference, but sustainable broad-based growth was also essential and improvements in health and poverty reduction were important. ECA reports emphasized the type of strategies that might work best. In the spirit of the New Partnership for Africa's Development, ECA monitoring performance to see where countries were doing well and sharing best practices.

36. **Ms. Osseiran** (Secretary of the Commission, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia), Panellist, said that ESCWA was involved in the implementation of Agenda 21 at four levels: policy, technical assistance, monitoring of implementation and awareness-raising. ESCWA had conducted a study on sustainable development planning in the region, which was a relatively unfamiliar activity. It provided technical assistance to member States in incorporating environmental planning in development planning. In monitoring, it emphasized the chapters of Agenda 21 on water and energy, since the ESCWA region was rich in energy sources but suffered from aridity. It was promoting solar and wind energy and was working to create a water management council among member States. Given the dearth of material in Arabic on sustainable development, ESCWA had produced documents, posters, pamphlets and fact sheets in Arabic to sensitize the public at large. As it happened, the ESCWA region had only one member State, Yemen, in the least developed country category.

37. **Mr. Stanislaus** (Observer for Grenada) said that sustainable development had been a catch phrase for many years, but some Caribbean States depended on the banana crop to sustain life and were facing severe challenges from the World Trade Organization, which was accusing the United Kingdom and others of subsidizing their banana production. He would like to hear the response of the regional commissions to the irony of that attack by an international organization on sustainable development in small island developing States.

38. **Ms. Loemban Tobing-Klein** (Suriname) said that she would like to hear more about cooperation with the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, particularly from ECLAC, ESCAP and ECE. She was

also interested in any initiatives to promote ICT. In Suriname, a human-rights based approach to development was considered essential for sustainable development, and she would like to hear the views of the executive secretaries on that point. In the Latin American and Caribbean region in particular, school dropout figures for boys were high; she would like to know what attention was being paid to the problem. Since even the Monterrey Consensus did not double official development assistance, she wondered whether the regional commissions saw the achievement of the Millennium development goals as a realistic possibility, and, as a particular instance, whether more funding could be expected for follow-up to the Second World Assembly on Ageing.

39. **Mr. Sharma** (Nepal) said that cooperation within the United Nations system was important in order to realize the Millennium development goals and bring to fruition the objectives set at recent regional and international conferences. His delegation was pleased that the regional commissions had been working more closely with the rest of the United Nations system, but he feared that they were somewhat isolated. The description of the regional commissions in a heading of the Secretary-General's report (E/2002/15) as "outposts of the United Nations" suggested remoteness, whereas they should be an integral part of the system, working closely with the other regional commissions, other United Nations bodies and the Economic and Social Council in particular. Within their regions, they needed to interface better with all stakeholders, whether governmental, civil society or non-governmental, and with the local representatives of the United Nations funds and programmes. It would be useful to engage more extensively with subregional organizations on issues of poverty, globalization and trade liberalization. The aim was not so much a cross-fertilization of ideas and concepts, since there was already a saturation of policies. Rather, it was strategies of implementation that were needed. To achieve the Millennium development goals and make a real difference in people's lives, major reforms would be required in the regional commissions.

40. **Mr. Rojas** (Chile) said that at the twenty-ninth session of ECLAC in Brasilia its member States had entrusted the Commission with the task of developing a joint strategy on globalization. In view of the economic prognosis for Latin America and the Caribbean, the matter had become even more urgent, and his delegation would like to hear more from the Executive Secretary about the possible outlines of a strategy for dealing with the crisis, many of whose causal factors were external.

41. **Mr. Sosa** (Observer for the Dominican Republic) said that the regional commissions faced many common problems with respect to the environment, water and energy, and those problems might have common solutions. He would like the Executive Secretary of ECLAC to elaborate further on how environmental fiscal policy and environmental markets could contribute to sustainable development.

42. **Ms. Kotok** (United States of America) said that her delegation was pleased with the way the regional commissions had been focusing their work. While realizing that not all the regional commissions had the same mandate and that their work was demand-driven, she would like to know how much they collaborated with other regional organizations such as the Organization of American States or Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, and how often the executive secretaries met to share best practices.

43. **Mr. Kim** Hak-Su (Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Asia and the Pacific), Panellist, said that the regional commissions were in a process of revitalization and were following closely the second wave of the Secretary-General's reform. The heads of the regional commissions met between three and five times during the year, rotating coordination among them; he was the current coordinator. The meetings provided an opportunity to share experience, including best practices. Recently, topics for discussion had included ways of increasing interaction with the Council and strengthening the Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs. Joint interregional projects had also been submitted to the Development Account under the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. The regional commissions were working to ensure that the Millennium development goals were reflected in their work programmes and were sharing their medium-term plans and reform practices. ESCAP had an active Advisory Committee of Permanent Representatives and worked closely with member countries.

44. The use of the word "outpost" was not meant to imply distance from New York; rather, he saw himself as a "field commander" responsible for implementing the Council's resolutions and decisions at the regional level. Coordination with other United Nations bodies and subregional agencies was part of the ESCAP agenda and included quarterly meetings with 22

agencies, among them the Bretton Woods institutions and the Asian Development Bank. In September 2002, the executive heads of the Association of South-East Asian Nations, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation and the Economic Cooperation Organization would meet to discuss the development of joint programmes. UNDP resident coordinators visited ESCAP; recently, he had begun to attend their meetings as well. Both ESCAP and UNDP were involved at the national level in Viet Nam and Cambodia, and ESCAP and the UNDP Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific had launched an initiative for the joint monitoring and implementation of the Millennium development goals in their work programmes.

45. As part of its reform process, ESCAP had created an ICT subprogramme to provide strategy- and policy-related advice to member countries, particularly those which were marginalized. However, the reform also included a proposed change in the balance between the Commission's normative and operational activities, a greater emphasis on poverty reduction, globalization and other emerging social issues, demand-driven assistance on accession to the WTO and training programmes on the environment and commercial diplomacy.

46. **Mr. Ocampo** (Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean), Panellist, said that, since both internal and external factors had contributed to the vulnerability of Latin American countries, the problem must be addressed at both those levels and new impetus must be given to existing regional and subregional integration processes that would give member countries needed autonomy and efficiency. The report on globalization and development submitted at the twenty-ninth session of the Commission provided further information on that matter, while the three current international processes, the WTO negotiations, the Monterrey Consensus and the upcoming Johannesburg Summit, provided excellent opportunities for progress. Recently, ECLAC had included fiscal and environmental policy in its activities by carrying out a comparative study of how public resources for sustainable development were generated and allocated; in the future, a system of environment-related taxation would be created for that purpose.

47. ECLAC cooperated extensively with the Inter-American Development Bank and the Organization of American States through the Tripartite Committee on Trade Liberalization and with all the other regional initiatives of Latin America and the Caribbean, including the Puebla-Panama Plan, the Summit of the Americas process and the Ibero-American Summits. It had coordinated a report on Latin American children that had been submitted to the General Assembly at its special session on children and was involved in a regional cooperation programme with the Inter-American Development Bank, the World Bank and UNDP in pursuit of the Millennium development goals and, in particular, poverty eradication through existing national mechanisms and shared experiences. ECLAC was also cooperating closely with the Latin American and Caribbean Regional Network of the ICT Task Force and was helping the Dominican Republic to prepare for a regional meeting leading up to the World Summit on the Information Society.

48. **Ms. Singh** (India) noted that the Executive Director of ESCAP had mentioned that UNDP and ESCAP had established a joint initiative for implementation of the Millennium development goals and monitoring of progress in that area. It was not clear what kind of monitoring was envisaged, what kind of indicators would be used and what kind of arrangements would be made with Member States. Clearly, some sort of cooperation would be required. She asked what mandate ESCAP had to undertake such an activity.

49. Furthermore, the Executive Director's announcement that ESCAP would be involved in type 2 partnerships was premature. The regional commissions should await the outcome of the World Summit on Sustainable Development before planning follow-up activities.

50. **Mr. Kim** Hak-Su (Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Asia and the Pacific), Panellist, replied that the Indian Government had raised the question of whether ESCAP had a mandate to monitor implementation of the Millennium development goals in its consultation meetings with the Commission. The word "monitoring" was used in the Millennium Declaration; there was no intent to infringe on the sovereignty of Member States. The question of whether the word "review" should be used in place of "monitoring", as the Government had requested, had been discussed with UNDP in the meetings of the poverty centre advisory group. He hoped that the word "monitoring" would be interpreted flexibly.

51. On the basis of the discussions held at the Fourth Summit Preparatory Committee meeting in Bali, it was his understanding that the proposed type 2 partnerships

were similar to the extrabudgetary funding arrangements which ESCAP had already agreed with the Governments of Japan, the Netherlands, Korea and the United States of America.

52. **Ms. Tallawy** (Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia), Panellist, said that Western Asia lagged behind other regions where ICT was concerned. ESCWA had established an ICT division as part of its restructuring process, and a consultative committee had been established to revise policies and provide guidance on new technologies. The new committee had held a forum attended by various key figures from the region, including a winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, who had advised Governments on the priorities to be set. An advisory board would meet every two years and a task force would gather information on how technology could be used to reduce poverty and provide jobs for young people under age 25, who accounted for over half of the region's population. The Egyptian Government had introduced automatic teller machine (ATM) cards with the holders' fingerprints so that pensions could be withdrawn by recipients too poor to make the minimum deposit required for the opening of a bank account.

53. The executive secretaries of the regional commissions communicated on a daily basis by telephone and electronic mail and shared experiences on restructuring and implementation. ESCWA assisted the resident coordinators by providing conference facilities, interpretation and printing services and facilitating contact with Governments, and UNDP studies generally used consultants employed or recommended by ESCAP. Sectoral and other meetings were held with the Arab League, most recently on the issue of technology in June 2002, and she and the Secretary-General of the Arab League had made similar public statements on the need for decision makers to address development challenges through the use of technology.

54. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner on Human Rights (UNHCHR) had an office in the same building as ESCWA, which was training its staff in ways of incorporating human rights into its activities and of working with Governments on that sensitive issue. A project for the assessment of human rights in the region and plans for follow-up to the Second World Assembly on Ageing were also under way.

55. **Ms. Singh** (India) said that her Government's interpretation of the Millennium development goals and the proposed type 2 partnerships differed from that of the Executive Director of ESCAP. It would pursue the matter further in the appropriate forum in order to give the regional commissions a clear mandate for both the Johannesburg Summit and the General Assembly.

56. **Mr. Amoako** (Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa), Panellist, said that ECA had been promoting ICT for many years and had launched the African Information Society Initiative in 1996. In cooperation with various development partners, it was preparing national ICT infrastructure plans for 20 African countries, and it served as the secretariat for the ICT Task Force for Africa. Together with Cisco Academy, the World Bank and the Information for Development Programme, it had established a three-month ICT training programme for 60 African women. The Canadian Government had recently allocated $25 million over a three-year period to the development of a centre for connectivity and e-policy as part of the Information Technology Centre for Africa initiative.

57. The "right to development" approach was crucial in reducing poverty, achieving the Millennium development goals and combating HIV/AIDS. Like ESCWA, ECA was working closely with the UNHCHR in the context of the NEPAD, good governance and other fundamental issues.

58. An estimated $12 billion in additional funding for development cooperation had been voted at the International Conference on Financing for Development and the Fourth WTO Ministerial Conference; it was hoped that Africa would receive at least half of that amount. At best, however, that would merely constitute a return to the official development assistance levels of the late 1990s and would not suffice to meet the poverty reduction targets and the Millennium development goals.

59. Lastly, ECA spent 25 per cent of its resources on regional cooperation and provided direct or indirect support for the work of many regional organizations, particularly the African Union.

60. **Mr. Stanislaus** (Grenada), speaking on a point of order, said that sustainable development was at the heart of the banana issue in Caribbean countries, yet he had received no answer to his previous question. He wondered whether it was by design or otherwise that none of the participants, and particularly the Executive Secretary of ECLAC, had touched on an issue of such importance to the region.

61. **Ms. Schmögnerová** (Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Europe), Panellist, said that, while the importance of ICT for development had been slightly overestimated, electronic applications in the areas of trade, enterprise development and governance were definitely beneficial. ECE was involved in a new initiative that would assist 27 countries with transitional economies in the formulation of ICT policies. It had sponsored forums for women that included the promotion of electronic business through ICT. Together with the other regional commissions, it was preparing for the World Summit on the Information Society.

62. ECE cooperated not only with the European Union, but also with the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development and other regional bodies. In particular, it was responsible for the economic dimension of security in cooperation with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). In the area of the environment, ECE cooperated with OECD in carrying out extended producer responsibility reviews, concentrating on countries with transitional economies whereas OECD dealt primarily with its member countries. The two organizations also cooperated in holding the Conference of European Statisticians. There was a division of labour between ECE and the European Conference of Ministers of Transportation, in which ECE focused on transport norms and standards and the European Conference focused on transport policy. Lastly, cooperation with the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development could be improved.

63. **Mr. Ocampo** (Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean), Panellist, replying to the representative of Grenada, said he agreed that highly specific economies must be given significant alternatives and time to adjust to changes in the international rules regarding the products on which their economies depended. In particular, banana-growing Caribbean economies needed time either to introduce technological changes that would allow them to produce bananas that could compete on the international market or to develop alternative activities. Unfortunately, there was a significant difference of opinion on the banana issue among ECLAC member countries. However, all members agreed that the time element was crucial, and ECLAC had taken a strong position on that point.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.